

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4930

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 5695

LONDON FOR AMBASSADOR BOYD, USCIVAIR DEL

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, UK
SUBJECT: CIVAIR - US-UK AVIATION NEGOTIATIONS - HONG KONG ROUTES

REF: STATE 112201

1. CONGEN OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL AVIATION CALLED ON DAVID JEAFFRESON, HKG SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, AND MADE PRESENTATION ALONG LINES REQUESTED IN REFTEL. OFFICER STRESSED THE NUMEROUS ADVANTAGES TO HONG KONG OF FULLEST POSSIBLE SERVICE BY U.S. AIRLINES, CITED DANGER OF HARDENING ATTITUDE IN WASHINGTON TOWARD HONG KONG'S CONTINUED GENEROUS ACCESS TO U.S. MARKET, AND REQUESTED JEAFFRESON USE HIS INFLUENCE TO AVOID UK USE OF HONG KONG ROUTES AS BARGAINING LEVER IN US-UK NEGOTIATIONS.

2. JEAFFRESON REPLIED THAT HE WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG OF UNRESTRICTED AIR SERVICE BOTH PASSENGER AND CARGO. THIS WAS PRECISELY WHY HIS DEPUTY (DAVID WONG) AND THE ACTING CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER OF THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT (NORMAN LATHAM) WERE IN LONDON AS PART OF THE UK DELEGATION - TO PROTECT HONG KONG'S INTERESTS. JEAFFRESON SAID THE RESTRICTIONS THE UK PROPOSED FOR THE HONG KONG ROUTES WERE MINOR, PERTAINING

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ONLY TO FIFTH FREEDOM RIGHTS. CONGENOFF RESPONDED THAT US CONSIDERED THEM RESTRICTIVE AND UNACCEPTABLE, AND SAID HE COULD CONCEIVE OF NO REASON FOR THEIR HAVING BEEN PUT FORWARD OTHER THAN AS A BARGAINING POINT. JEAFFRESON DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THAT POINT, BUT, LATER IN THE CONVERSATION HE POINTED OUT THAT CATHAY PACIFIC HAD AN INTEREST IN THE QUESTION OF FIFTH FREEDOM RIGHTS FOR U.S. AIRLINES. CONGENOFF REMINDED HIM OF HONG KONG'S

DEEP COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF FREE COMPETITION. JEAFFRESON EMPHASIZED THAT HKG WAS NOT INTERESTED IN PROTECTING CATHAY PACIFIC.

3. JEAFFRESON TOOK NOTE OF THE POTENTIAL DANGER OF RETAILIATION IN AREAS OF IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG, AND OFFERED TO INFORM THE TWO HONG KONG REPRESENTATIVES ON THE UK DELEGATION OF TODAY'S CONVERSATION. HE POINTED OUT THAT, WHILE HKG WAS ATTEMPTING VIGOROUSLY TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS, HONG KONG WAS, AFTER ALL, BRITISH TERRITORY AND THEREFORE, LIMITED IN HOW FAR IT COULD GO.

4. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT HKG IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF ITS HEAVY ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON THE U.S. AND DOES NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE OUR GOOD WILL. DEMARCHES, SUCH AS THE ONE MADE TODAY SHOULD STRENGTHEN THAT RESOLVE. GIVEN HKG'S AWARENESS OF TOTALITY OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS THAT HONG KONG DERIVES FROM ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., WE SEE NO NEED FOR U.S. TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS ON HONG KONG ROUTES. WE AGREE THERE IS NOTHING UNIQUELY HONG KONG ON WHICH WE COULD THREATEN RESTRICTIONS. FURTHERMORE, THERE APPEARS NO NEED AT THIS TIME TO GO BEYOND SUGGESTION ALREADY CONVEYED THAT HK-US ECONOMIC CONFRONTATION WOULD NOT BE IN HONG KONG'S INTEREST. CROSS

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